

DATE: May 19, 2008

FOR: All DOC Employees

Some airlines are now charging for seats they designate as "choice or premium," such as aisle, front of the cabin, larger seats, and window seats. Three airlines that are currently charging for "premium" seats are Northwest, United, and US Airways. The cost varies from airline to airline. Other factors that may determine the cost include: distance of the flight, domestic, or international. This fee may be waived by certain airlines depending upon the traveler's status in a frequent flyer program. The choice to pay extra for "choice or premium" seats is borne by the employee and Government is not required to repay the employee. The exception to this rule is noted in Federal Travel Regulation section 301-13, "Travel of an Employee with Special Needs." The regulation notes that additional travel expenses will be paid by the Government when it is necessary to accommodate a special physical need that is either clearly visible and discernible or substantiated in writing by a competent medical authority.

It is very important to make reservations early in order to obtain the best seat selection. The booking of contract fares is guaranteed as long as economy class seats are available, but the choice of a particular seat is not guaranteed. It is recommended that travelers arrive at the airport for early check-in to maintain pre-reserved seats.

For additional information, please contact Cheryl Elzie, in the Office of Travel Management, at (202) 482-6137.

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